

1 Peter 4:1-11
Living in View of the End

4 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,^[a] arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.⁶ For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

⁷ The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Our passage today reveals two great truths that govern the life of the Christian:

- 1. Christ's suffering calls us to a radical break with sin.**
- 2. Christ's coming calls us to a radical commitment to the will of God.**

First, let's consider "Christ's suffering calls us to a radical break with sin." 1 Peter 4: begins:

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh...

This word "therefore" is extremely important in the scriptures. Whenever we see, we have to ask, What happened beforehand that requires this result? What was it the scriptures were saying that requires a necessary response from us?

The text says here that "Christ suffered in the flesh." This is a reference back to verse 18 in the previous chapter:

1 Pet. 3:18 - *¹⁸ For Christ also ^(A)suffered^[a] ^(B)once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, ^(C)that he might bring us to God, being put to death ^(D)in the flesh but made alive ^(E)in the spirit...*

Here is the heart of our redemption – this is the locomotive that drives all the cars in the train of salvation. At the heart of our redemption is the Man on the cross. He was the

sacrifice for our sins. His shed blood did what none of the millions of animals which had been slaughtered on the altars in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem could do. His death, his poured-out blood erased, and took away permanently the sins of his people. For the man or woman washed in Jesus' blood not a spot of sin remains.

Since Christ did all this, how are we to respond? Verse 1 continues...

...arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,

We are told to arm ourselves, that is, put on our battle gear and get ready for spiritual warfare. But he tells us the particular way we are to arm ourselves – it is in our thinking, specifically, we are to have a similar mindset as our Lord Jesus.

for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ²so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

What does this mean? Here is the way I think we can understand this. I believe it is really a reference to our union with Jesus Christ. When we have come by faith to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we enter into a spiritual union with him. When he died on the cross, we died – specifically our sinful nature died. When he rose from the dead, we were united to him in his resurrection so as a Christian we live in the power of Christ's resurrection.

We see this truth in Romans 6, as in Romans 6:11 - ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves ^(I)dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So, it is by Christ's suffering in the flesh, and then our union with him, that we live a new kind of life that we'd never known before.

Christ's death and resurrection broke the reign, the dominion of the flesh in our lives. The flesh refers to our sinful nature. Its power over us was broken by Christ's redemptive work.

And the result is that we have been set free, as verse 2 says, ²**so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.**

This same truth is seen in romans 6:12-13:

¹² Let not ^(B)sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ ^(C)Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but ^(D)present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness

The first great truth we're considering is... **Christ's suffering calls us to a radical break with sin.**

³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

Peter is saying here that you had your fill of living ungodly lives like pagan Gentiles. What is emphasized here is lust for sinful pleasures – sexual sins and immersion into alcohol and worship in pagan temples. Often pagan worship included sexual acts like the free offer of temple prostitutes. This is why it was a temptation to the Israelites and why they often fell into that trap. They forsook the worship of the true God for sexual pleasure. Sex became their idol, not the true and living God, the God of holiness and purity and righteousness.

Notice that the text says that the sinful practices the Gentiles were doing is what “they want to do.” That was the goal of their lives; their lives centered around these wicked behaviors. They gloried in their sin. Not so you Christians. Christ has broken sin’s power over you; he has set you free.

Peter is saying that old chapter of your life is closed. A new day has dawned – you have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. So don’t go back to the darkness. Cast it aside. Don’t go back and wallow in the pigpen.

As Paul said it in Rom. 6:19: *For just as you once presented your **members** as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your **members** as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.*

This type of sinful lifestyle that marked the pagan Gentiles, is not different from lifestyles common today.

We see this theme of a new lifestyle for Christians emphasized throughout Peter’s first letter here:

1 Pet. 1:15 -but as he who called you is **holy**, you also **be holy** in all your conduct

The new Christian lifestyle is marked by holiness, separation unto God for his purposes and glory, denying sinful passions of the flesh and dedicated to a life that pleases God, following the righteous example of the Lord Jesus and seeking to live in harmony with the pattern, the standard set forth in the Word of God.

⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;

1 Pet. 2:12-¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

When we do not participate with the people of our surrounding culture in their sinful behavior we seem strange to them, like some kind of alien beings from another planet. What do they do? They make fun of the Christians, speak evil of them, harass them.

Alan Stibbs: "Henceforth we must renounce these old ways and live differently; and admittedly, if we do, our former companions in such evil-doings are bound to be surprised that we no longer share in their profligate excesses, and they may be expected to give expression to their displeasure by reviling us." P. 147

⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

But the tables will be turned on them. God himself will call them to account for their behavior. That which they gloried in will turn out to be fodder for the judgment fires of God against them.

They will have to answer personally to God himself – it says "to him". Can you imagine what it will be like to stand before the holy, almighty, righteous Judge of the universe? Nothing can be hidden from him; he knows all. He knows every sinful thought, every sinful motivation, every sinful attitude, word and act - all that wicked humanity has ever done will be laid before his all-seeing eyes.

God's fiery eyes of omniscience and omnipotence will infallibly analyze each life and render judgment for every infraction of thought, word, and action. ***"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*** Heb. 10:31

Heb. 9:27 - *And just as ^(A)it is appointed for man to die once, and ^(B)after that comes judgment.*

As sure as the sun come up tomorrow, there is a Judgment coming. Both those living and those who have died will be judged. Death is no escape from the Judgment of God. The only escape is to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is well able to save his people from the Judgment to come. He has been judged in place of his people. He bore the wrath of God against their sin so they would not have to bear it themselves.

I hope all of you have fled from the wrath to come by fleeing to and clinging to the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to him in sincere and humble faith, and he will take you to himself and hide you from the wrath to come.

We must do this. We must flee to Christ. And then we must live our lives as Christian people.

I. Christ's suffering calls us to a radical break with sin.

But the second half of this passage, v. 6-11, also calls for something radical:

II. Christ's coming calls us to a radical commitment to the will of God

⁶ For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

This is another verse in this passage that is difficult to interpret. This is what I think it is likely saying: there are some believers who have died but when they were alive the Gospel was preached to them and they believed it and were saved. So even though they have since died, they are alive in their spirits somewhere and somehow in the presence of God, similar to the way God is a Spirit. .

⁷ The end of all things is at hand...

This is a radical statement that Peter is making. What he is saying is that the end of the world is coming. The present age is ending. The curtain on history is about to close. Human existence on this earth in its present form is ending. Time as we know it is ending; eternity is coming.

This is a radical statement and were he not an inspired Apostle of the Lord Jesus we might think he's not well mentally.

But this is another theme common in Peter's letters. What he is referring to is the second coming of Christ and the end of this present age. He has emphasized this previously as in...

1 Pet. 1:13 - ¹³ *Therefore, preparing your minds for action,^[a] and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Because "the end of all things is at hand," because Christ is coming, it requires action from us, response from us.

II. Christ's coming calls us to a radical commitment to the will of God.

Look again at verse 2: so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

What does it mean to live for the will of God? Peter tells us exactly what this means. He says in verse 7...

...**therefore be self-controlled** (same word to describe the Gadarene demoniac after Jesus healed him in Mark 5:15, “he was sitting clothed and in his right mind.”

A characteristic of pagan Gentiles in that day and our day is they lack self-control of their bodily appetites for food, drink, sex, and so forth. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Self-control of our bodily appetites is just as important as love, faithfulness, etc. We should control our appetites, not let them control us.

Christ’s coming calls us to a radical commitment to the will of God by exercising self-control in our lives.

He goes on in verse 7:

... **and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.**

Stibbs: Christians “should keep themselves awake and alert, with all their faculties under control in order to be able to give themselves to praying.” p.154

By being sober-minded we are being committed to the will of God.

⁸ **Above all, keep loving one another earnestly**, (Stibbs quotes Cranfield, “earnestly does not refer to warmth of emotion, but to the “taut muscle of strenuous and sustained effort as of a s athlete.”

So earnest love for one another **demonstrates a radical commitment to the will of God.**

Notice the importance of this virtue: “love” is above all the other virtues. It is above self-control and sober mindedness. Not that these two virtues are not important, they are, and we should strive for them, but love is the supreme Christian virtue.

And how are we to love one another – it says earnestly. Other English translations say “love each other deeply” NIV’

“have fervent love among yourselves:” NKJV

“maintain constant love for one another” CSB

Cf. Col. 3:14 - ¹⁴ And above all these put on ^(AL)love, which ^(AM)binds everything together in ^(AN)perfect harmony.” [above all the other virtues]

Christian love was another common theme in Peter's ministry: There are five exhortations in 1 Peter for Christians to love one another:

1 Pet. 3:8 - ⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

..since love covers a multitude of sins. How does love cover a multitude of sins?

(Stibbs: Love is ready to forgive again and again. It finds a way to shelter the wrongdoer from exposure and condemnation.)

Prov. 10:12 - Hatred stirs up strife,
but ^(A)love covers all offenses.

Example of Joseph not wanting to expose Mary to public disgrace, he decided to divorce her quietly.

Another interpretation of this expression is that it refers to Jesus himself: he loved by going to the cross and dying in his people's place and thus covered the multitude of their sins.

Peter then goes on to show some specific ways we can demonstrate love to the brethren:

⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

This also is a way we love one another earnestly and show our radical commitment to the will of God.

Notice Peter's awareness of human nature. Showing hospitality to others can be inconvenient and some extra work, but we should exercise this ministry when the Lord sends someone our way.

I can remember the times people have showed hospitality to me and how much it meant to be invited into a home, be fed a meal, and given a place to sleep.

In the days of Peter there were not so many inns available and it was more important for Christians to open their homes and show hospitality.

¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Notice that Peter says every Christian has received a gift by which we can serve the brethren. This is another manifestation of how love works in our lives and in our

fellowship. There are basically two categories of service: either speaking, that is, ministering the Word of God or serving in other capacities.

¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God

“oracles” = Scriptures, Word of God

Rom. 3:2 - ² Much in every way. To begin with, ^(A)the Jews were entrusted with ^(B)the oracles of God.

Heb. 5:12 - ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again ^(A)the basic principles of the oracles of God.

So those among us who teach and preach the Word of God should realize that the Word being shared are the oracles, the very Words of God and therefore are to be preached with the utmost care and reverence, as well as diligence in study and preparation. For this is the primary means by which God equips his people for their ministry.

The other group of gifts, ... **whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies....**would be various kinds of service to the church such as cooking meals, or cleaning up. In Acts 6 we see that deacons were appointed to serve tables, that is, to help feed the poor widows in the church, so that the apostles could be free to devote their time to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

So whether it is in speaking or serving, there is one goal in all of this: **in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. This is another way we reveal a radical commitment to the will of God in our lives.**

It is as we work and serve in the church as a team, that we bring glory to God. In humility, serving one another in love.

To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The reference here is probably more specifically to Jesus, rather than to God the Father, although whenever Jesus is glorified, the Father is also.

The two main ideas in our passage today are:

- 1. Christ's suffering calls us to a radical break with sin.**
- 2. Christ's coming calls us to a radical commitment to the will of God.**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us **run** with endurance **the race** that is set before us... ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter

of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb. 12:1-2

The Lord Jesus Christ has done all for us in going to the cross and bearing our sins. Therefore, let's get radical with sin in our lives – let's throw it out, despise it, and in its place give ourselves wholly to the will of God, to use us as he will for his service and glory in the earth. This is how we should live in view of the coming end of all things on earth and the coming of our Lord Jesus back to receive us unto himself. Amen.

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